

there were two refuges for us in the various bases in which we served, and in particular, I remember in Fort Knox, Kentucky, the USO was always there on the weekends for the purpose of providing extra services and relaxation for the veterans who were serving or the members of the Armed Forces who were serving at Fort Knox, and also the American Legion always had some kind of hostmanship-type of function to welcome the soldiers who were stationed at Fort Knox.

So for a whole series of remembrances for this Member, we support the bill and hope that many more veterans will be joining the ranks of the American Legion in the next several years.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3988, the American Legion Amendments Act. I urge my colleagues to support this timely measure.

This legislation amends the charter of the American Legion to revise eligibility for the organization to those individuals who have served honorably in the Armed Forces during or after specific periods. Presently, service members are only eligible if they have served during specific periods, including designated windows for World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon/Grenada, Panama, and Desert Storm. Because the window governing Desert Storm has not closed, under current law, Desert Storm veterans are not eligible to join the American Legion. This measure corrects this problem.

The American Legion was founded and chartered by Congress in 1919. Its first major accomplishment was the creation of the U.S. Veterans Bureau, which was the precursor to the Veteran's Administration. Significant accomplishments of the Legion include the enactment of the G.I. bill, and the establishment of the cabinet-level department of Veterans Affairs.

The Legion also led the fight for an investigation into the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, the investigations into gulf-war illnesses among Desert Storm veterans, and for the constitutional amendment to prohibit physical desecration of the American flag.

Like its fellow veterans service organizations, the American Legion offers valuable service to its membership, including, but not limited to: seeking discharge upgrades, record corrections, education benefits, disability compensation matters and pension eligibility. The Legion also has a long and distinguished history of community service.

Given our current war on terrorism, I believe it is appropriate for Congress to recognize, expand and promote the efforts of our veterans service organizations. For this reason, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3988.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AMVETS CHARTER AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3214) to amend the charter of the AMVETS organization.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3214

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS TO AMVETS CHARTER.

(a) NAME OF ORGANIZATION.—(1) Sections 22701(a) and 22706 of title 36, United States Code, are amended by striking “AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam)” and inserting “AMVETS (American Veterans)”.

(2)(A) The heading of chapter 227 of such title is amended to read as follows:

“CHAPTER 227—AMVETS (AMERICAN VETERANS)”.

(B) The item relating to such chapter in the table of chapters at the beginning of subtitle II of such title is amended to read as follows:

“227. AMVETS (AMERICAN VETERANS) 22701”.

(b) GOVERNING BODY.—Section 22704(c)(1) of such title is amended by striking “seven national vice commanders” and all that follows through “a judge advocate,” and inserting “two national vice commanders, a finance officer, a judge advocate, a chaplain, six national district commanders.”.

(c) HEADQUARTERS AND PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS.—Section 22708 of such title is amended—

(1) by striking “the District of Columbia” in the first sentence and inserting “Maryland”; and

(2) by striking “the District of Columbia” in the second sentence and inserting “Maryland”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3214, the bill currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3214 would amend the Federal charter for the American Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam to American Veterans to more accurately reflect the membership of AMVETS. AMVETS membership now includes not only veterans

from those three wars, but also anyone who served honorably after 1940, and the National Guardsmen and Reservists.

At the AMVETS annual convention in 1998, the delegates voted for an official name change from American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to American Veterans to more accurately reflect the membership. Additionally, AMVETS has voted to change the structure of their governing body. This bill contains language to reflect the structure change in the statute.

Finally, because AMVETS has moved the location of their headquarters from the District of Columbia to Lanham, Maryland, the “Headquarters and principal place of business” section of their charter needs to be changed to indicate that they are now located in Maryland. In order for these changes to be recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the AMVETS Federal charter must be amended, and this bill does that.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to pass H.R. 3214, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the legislation that we have before us, H.R. 3214, would amend the Federal charter of the American veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to reflect changes made at its 1998 convention. It is extremely important to ensure that we respond to the request of these valiant and heroic servicemen and women.

Their original charter, received in 1947, has been amended by Congress over the years to give membership to Korean War veterans and Vietnam veterans, and to reflect other changing characteristics of the organization.

In 1998, at the AMVETS annual convention, the delegates voted for an official name change of American veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to “American Veterans” to more accurately reflect the membership of AMVETS. Additionally, AMVETS voted to change the structure of their governing body. The organization also voted to change the location of their headquarters from the District of Columbia to Lanham, Maryland. Therefore, the “Headquarters and principal place of business” section of their charter needs to be changed to indicate that they are now located in Maryland.

In order for these changes to be recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the AMVETS Federal charter must be amended. This bill will accomplish that and allow them to continue to do the service that they do on behalf of the American people and as well to continue to honor the veterans who participate in this organization.

I support H.R. 3214 as it would amend the Federal charter of the American Veterans of

World War II, Korea, and Vietnam (AMVETS), to reflect changes made at its 1998 convention. Their original charter, received in 1947, has been amended by Congress over the years to give membership to Korean War veterans and Vietnam veterans, and to reflect other changing characteristics of the organization.

In 1998, at the AMVETS annual convention, the delegates voted for an official name change from American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to "American Veterans" to more accurately reflect the membership of AMVETS. Additionally, the AMVETS voted to change the structure of their governing body. The organization also voted to change the location of their headquarters from the District of Columbia to Lanham, Maryland. Therefore, the "Headquarters and principal place to business" section of their charter needs to be changed to indicate they are now located in Maryland.

In order for these changes to be recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs the AMVETS federal charter must be amended. This bill will accomplish all of this.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

This time, of course, I want to speak about the AMVETS who, in Pennsylvania, throughout the time that I served in the legislature, continuously participated in legislative action that pertained to veterans. On the question of veterans preference in civil service examinations and placement, in veterans benefits of all types, and in the question that arose from time to time on the legitimacy of when certain holidays were to be observed: Memorial Day, Veteran's Day back then, which was Armistice Day, et cetera.

So the AMVETS themselves, just like the American Legion aforementioned, have participated in civic, as well as neighborhood, events throughout Pennsylvania and, I am sure, throughout the Nation.

I wanted the record to be complete that this veterans organization, just as the American Legion, have been a part of the neighborhood for many, many years and will continue to expand now that we know the parameters, through this legislation, will have been expanded.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Let me just simply say that today as we stand here on this floor, we have young men and women fighting for us in Afghanistan, young men and women serving in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. This is important legislation, as the previous legislation was, to make procedural changes for our vets; and we honor them as we amend this particular legislation, and I would ask my colleagues to support it.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3214, the AMVETS

Charter Amendment Act. I urge my colleagues to support this timely measure.

This legislation amends the charter of the AMVETS organization to: change the meaning of AMVETS to American veterans, revises the composition of its governing body, and provides for its headquarters and place of business to move from the District of Columbia to Maryland.

AMVETS, which previously stood for the American Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, was founded in 1944 out of the belief that WWII Veterans needed an organization that represented their generation. In the following decades, veterans from Korea and Vietnam were permitted to join through charter modifications made by Congress.

Like its fellow veterans service organizations, AMVETS offers valuable services to its membership, including, but not limited to: seeking discharge upgrades, record corrections, education benefits, disability compensation matters and pension eligibility. AMVETS also has a long and distinguished history of community service.

Given our current war on terrorism, I believe it is appropriate for Congress to recognize, expand and promote the efforts of our veterans service organizations. For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3214, a bill I introduced to amend the Federal charter for the AMVETS organization. The bill makes a number of simple changes to the organization's current charter, which was first approved in 1947.

First, my bill changes the meaning of AMVETS from American Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam to American veterans. AMVETS was founded on December 10, 1944, in Kansas City, Missouri. It was born out of the desire for WWII veterans to have their own organization.

Overtime, AMVETS' charter has been amended to allow veterans from following wars to join the organization. In 1984, the charter was amended to allow anyone who served honorably after 1940 to join the veterans' group. As a result, its current name does not encompass this broader membership. H.R. 3214 would correct this discrepancy and allow the organization's name to more adequately reflect its current membership. This name change was also approved by the organization's members at their 1998 annual convention.

In 1961, AMVETS modified the structure of its governing body. However, its current charter still reflects its old organizational structure. Therefore, H.R. 3214 also revises the organization's Federal charter to reflect the new composition of AMVETS' governing body.

Finally, since the approval of the original charter, the organization has relocated their headquarters from the District of Columbia to Lanham, Maryland. H.R. 3214 amends the original AMVETS charter to provide for its headquarters and principal place of business to be in Maryland rather than the District of Columbia.

I want to thank Chairman SENSENBRENNER, Subcommittee Chairman GEKAS, full Committee Ranking Member CONYERS and Subcommittee Ranking member SHEILA JACKSON-LEE for their assistance in moving this legislation.

H.R. 3214 is noncontroversial and I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, as an original co-sponsor of H.R. 3214, the AMVETS Charter Amendment Act, I am pleased this important measure has been considered and favorably reported by the Committee on Judiciary. This measure amends the AMVETS charter to bring the charter into conformance with current practices. It deserves the support of every Member.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from Florida, MIKE BILIRAKIS, for his leadership on this issue. As the author of H.R. 3214, MIKE BILIRAKIS has been a strong and committed advocate for H.R. 3214 and his efforts in large measure are responsible for this important legislation being considered by the House today.

Again, I urge all of my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 3214, the AMVETS Charter Amendment Act.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3214.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS CHARTER AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3838) to amend the charter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States organization to make members of the armed forces who receive special pay for duty subject to hostile fire or imminent danger eligible for membership in the organization, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3838

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. AMENDMENTS TO VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES CHARTER.

(a) ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP OF INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SPECIAL PAY FOR DUTY SUBJECT TO HOSTILE FIRE OR IMMINENT DANGER.—Section 230103 of title 36, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking "or" at the end of paragraph (1);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (2) and inserting "or"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(3) in an area which entitled the individual to receive special pay for duty subject to hostile fire or imminent danger under section 310 of title 37."

(b) CLARIFICATION OF PURPOSES OF THE CORPORATION.—Section 230102 of such title is amended in the matter preceding paragraph (1) by inserting "charitable," before "and educational,".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from